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SUBJECT: SOMALIA - TFG, ARS, CIVIL SOCIETY DISCUSS FUTURE GOVERNMENT MODELS

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) held a workshop on federalism and decentralization in Nairobi from November 27 to 29. The conference drew together high level, cross-clan and cross-regional representation from Somali scholars, civil society, Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) officials, including Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein and ARS Central Committee Chairman Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan. Participants candidly discussed federal, unitary and other forms of government, and their suitability for Somalia. A large majority of participants expressed reservations about federalism, and suggested a highly devolved unitary system for Somalia, in which the central government would delegate power to regional or local officials or bodies. Participants recognized that the workshop was an endorsement of the November 26 TFG/ARS unity government agreement reached in Djibouti. The conference debate contributed to the Independent Federal Constitutional Commission's inclusive efforts to draft a national constitution. End Summary.

12. (SBU) At Prime Minister Hussein's request, UNDP and UNPOS jointly organized a three-day workshop on federalism and decentralization in Nairobi on November 27-29. A cross-section of the Somali diaspora's constitutional, economic and governance experts, local Somali political leadership, civil society representatives and international subject matter experts participated in the workshop. Prime Minister Hussein opened and closed the conference, which we also attended.

13. (SBU) On the first and second days, Somali and international experts made presentations on federalism and other forms of government, clan realities in Somalia, electoral management structure, and governance institutions within the various systems. On the third and final day a Somalis-only closed session was held and participants divided into three groups to discuss and address concerns on each of three questions: aspects of the various systems of government that they would like to see in the new constitution; the concerns they had about a federal system; and priority issues, such as economic, clan, treatment of minorities they would like to see addressed by any system of government. Transparency and accountability, democracy and good governance, rule of law, a fair and equitable distribution of resources, and separation of powers were some of the issues discussed in all three groups.

14. (SBU) Details of these closed door sessions were scarce, but participants told us there was little support for federalism as a viable model for Somalia. Despite, or possibly because, the TFG's charter prescribed federalism as the system of governance, many participants concluded that a unitary but highly devolved system of government was right for Somalia. Much of their concern centered on

the potential size and power of a federalist government. Responding to participants' fears, Mark Bowden, UNDP resident coordinator, argued there was "nothing necessarily wrong with the 'F' word." Prime Minister Hassan called for the formation of a technical team of experts to review and to develop further the workshop's key findings, a request UNDP agreed to undertake.

¶15. (SBU) Conference participants lauded the workshop for its substance and timing, given the TFG's and ARS's November 26 Djibouti agreement on the composition of a unity government.

¶16. (SBU) Comment: Perhaps the most remarkable thing about the conference was the effortless way in which ARS and TFG officials interacted. We marveled as PM Hussein and ARS leader Sharif Hassan conversed freely, when six months ago they would not have set foot in the same room. The Prime Minister seemed to command respect from both TFG and ARS participants. It was also clear that participants were pleased with progress in Djibouti on a unity government, and talk of next steps dominated chatter on the margins of the conference.

RANNEBERGER